

### THE REENLISTMENT OF STAFF SERGEANT MARY VALDEZ

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Madam Speaker, on January 21, I attended a USARPAC Sisters in Arms forum in Hawaii, and I met a warrior and a hero. Her name is Staff Sergeant Mary Valdez. I watched in awe, inspired as she stood at attention with her right hand raised, tears streaming down her face as she swore to defend the Constitution, to obey the orders of the President, and to obey the orders of the officers over her.

Her strength and love for our Nation was palpable for everyone in the room, despite her having been savagely raped by a fellow soldier just weeks before her 2011 deployment to Afghanistan. She pressed charges, she took him to trial, and the man who raped her was acquitted and still serves in our United States Army today.

When she spoke after her reenlistment, tears streaming down her face, she said, "I love being a soldier. I love this Army." Her courage, resilience, and commitment to fulfilling her duty is what makes our military the strongest in the world.

We owe it to Staff Sergeant Valdez and all servicemembers to bring about reforms so they are not faced with this kind of adversity. They are fulfilling their duty and their responsibility every day. We must fulfill ours.

### CALLING FOR SANDY RELIEF OVERSIGHT

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remind every Member of this Chamber that just over a year ago this Congress voted to provide \$50 billion in much-needed Hurricane Sandy relief, including to my home State of New Jersey. I fought very hard for that money, and now this Congress has the responsibility and obligation to ensure that the Federal Sandy recovery funds are being distributed properly to the people who need it most. Constituents from my district are still displaced from their homes and are awaiting much-needed help.

According to a report released by the Fair Share Housing Center of New Jersey, low-income individuals are being denied claims at a higher rate than wealthier individuals. There is a need for more transparency on the standards being used to distribute these funds.

Also, a report on where and whom the funds are going to is obviously needed. I urge my colleagues to make sure that proper oversight is conducted and that the funding gets to those communities who are in most dire need.

### EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Ms. HAHN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HAHN. Madam Speaker, this is the third month that my colleagues and I have asked that unemployment benefits be extended to help our communities. Those benefits expired on December 28, and more than 1.7 million Americans, including 263,000 in California alone, have already lost access to these benefits, and another quarter of a million will be hit by the end of the month if we don't act.

Madam Speaker, if we act now, we can still help our friends and our neighbors who are trying to support their families as they find a new job instead of taking away what may be the only way they can afford food. There are more than 1 million Americans trying to do just that, and we should do everything we can to help them return to the workforce.

Previous Congresses have extended unemployment benefits time and time again with bipartisan support. Why is it that a program that we know helps members of our community and strengthens our economy is suddenly disposable? Let me remind you that these are unemployed workers who deserve our help.

I hope that we are allowed to vote on this bill and extend this vital economic lifeline.

### COVERED CALIFORNIA ENROLLMENT

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight the success of California with the Affordable Care Act in bringing some of the highest enrollment numbers across this Nation. I am not surprised to see California leading the way; after all, we are the Golden State.

However, there is so much work still to be done by the 31st of March, which is the deadline for enrolling people this year. And I am going to work very hard, along with my California colleagues. I have reached out to our Covered California executive director, Peter Lee, and asked him to make sure that we enroll every single eligible Californian.

With only 8 weeks left for open enrollment, I am making it my top priority that every qualified resident of my 46th Congressional District is given the opportunity to enroll, and I strongly encourage all of my fellow colleagues to do the same. To make good on the promise of quality and affordable health care, it is not enough to educate. We must make sure everybody is enrolled.

### THE FLOOD INSURANCE TRUST FUND

(Ms. CASTOR of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise to urge the Republican leadership here in the House to immediately take up the bill to provide flood insurance relief to millions of Americans across the country and develop a long-term solution for the flood insurance trust fund. Last week, the Senate passed, by a broad bipartisan vote, a bill to provide just such relief by a vote of 67 bipartisan Members in the affirmative.

I urge the House Republican leadership right away to take up the Senate-passed bill in the House for a vote. We already have over 182 bipartisan cosponsors that are ready to act.

Madam Speaker, there is great skepticism that this Republican-controlled House of Representatives will act to protect the middle class and to boost our economy across this country. Well, let's prove them wrong, and let's work together to pass a flood insurance relief bill as soon as possible. We can work together to solve this problem.

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### YEAR OF ACTION

(Ms. HANABUSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HANABUSA. Madam Speaker, happy Lunar New Year, or as we say in Hawaii, Kung Hee Fat Choy. This is the "Year of the Horse," which has as one of its characteristics decisive action. It is said that it is not the year to procrastinate, and the lack of procrastination will bring success.

Remember President Obama said in his State of the Union, this year we are in the year of action. The people of this great Nation have been waiting for us to show action. Some have just given up hope on us, and you can't blame them. Let us show them that we are capable of doing the job that they sent us here to do by at least addressing critical legislation like creating jobs, restoring unemployment benefits, addressing the minimum wage, reforming the immigration system, and, of course, avoiding the default. Let's show them, Madam Speaker, that we are able to do this because we can.

### SOLVING UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Madam Speaker, solving our unemployment crisis is not only about restoring our economy, it is about restoring dignity to tens of millions of Americans. Unemployment means anxiety and insecurity that translates into worse mental and physical health. Unemployment